

Serial No. 10/603,625
Amendment
Responsive to Office Action dated October 30, 2007

Docket No. KAS-183

REMARKS

Pending Claims

Claims 1-6 are pending in this application. Claims 1 and 4 have been amended. New claim 6 has been added. No new matter has been added.

Claim Rejections under 35 U.S.C. §112

Claims 4-5 have been rejected under 35 U.S.C. §112, second paragraph for failing to particularly point out and distinctly claim the invention. Applicants have amended claim 4 to overcome the antecedent support error in the claim kindly noted by the Examiner. Accordingly, the 35 U.S.C. §112, second paragraph, rejection of claims 4 and 5 should be withdrawn.

Claim Rejections under 35 U.S.C. §102

Claims 1-5 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. §102(b) as being anticipated by Ohishi et al, U.S. Patent No. 6,019,945. Applicants request reconsideration of the rejection in view of the foregoing amendments and for the following reasons.

Applicants have amended claim 1 to more clearly set forth the differences between the claimed invention and that of the prior art. In particular, claim 1 has been amended to set forth that the central control device has a function of separating one of said analysis units from said information network to enable shut off of a power supply of said one of said analysis units while other analysis units are maintained connected to said information network. See page 7, lines 16-20 which states that the analysis unit that has been set to a power-off enable mode keeps on being software wise separated from the information network of the entire analyzer

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system until the mode switch is switched from the power-off enable node to the active mode. Further, as set forth on page 7, lines 20-25, it is stated that the analyzer is able to shut off the power supply only to one analysis unit using the power-off switch for the analysis unit, with the power supply to the entire analyzer system continued. Accordingly, for example, as set forth in lines 1-5 on page 7 of the Specification, when one analysis unit suffers any failure during an analysis operation, the analysis unit stops its operation and enters a standby state with the entire analyzer system continuing the analysis operation. Then, when the entire analyzer system enters a standby state after an analysis operation has been completed, an operator can set the failed analysis unit to a power-off enable mode, whereupon it is possible to shut off the power supply for the failed analysis unit using the power-off switch for the analysis unit, as described.

Claim 6, which is a new claim, sets forth that the central control device has a function of separating each of the analysis units from the information network to enable shut off of a power supply of a separated one of said analysis units when the one analysis unit is set to the power-off enable mode by the analysis unit setting section while other analysis units are maintained connected to the information network. Accordingly, support for claim 6 is also provided by the sections of the Specification set forth on page 7 thereof that are discussed with respect to the support in the Specification provided for the amendments to claim 1.

Claims 1-6 are patentable over the cited reference to Ohishi. Although Ohishi discloses a sample analysis system having plural analysis units, Ohishi is silent in its disclosure with respect to a discussion regarding the separation of the analysis unit from an information network. According to the embodiments of the present invention, an analysis unit can be set to a power-off enable mode and the analysis units have a power-off switch. In particular, the

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central control device separates an analysis unit from the information network to enable the shut off of the power supply to the analysis unit while maintaining the connection of the other analysis units to the information network. Accordingly, the power source of the entire automatic analyzer does not need to be turned off even in the event of the failure of one of the analysis units. Ohishi does not disclose this aspect of the claimed combination.

One having ordinary skill in the art would understand from the art of record known at the time of the invention, such as Ohishi, that when an analysis unit of an automatic analyzer fails, the failed analysis unit is not separated from the information network of the control computer that controls the entire automatic analyzer to enable shut off of the power supply of the analysis unit while other analysis units are maintained connected to the information network, as claimed by applicants.

According to the embodiments of the invention, the central control device separates a failed analysis unit from the information network to enable shut off of the power supply to the failed analysis unit while the other analysis units are maintained connected to the information network. This enables the object of the invention to be achieved in which it is unnecessary to turn off the power source of the entire automatic analyzer in order to turn off the power source of a failed analysis unit, and further the analysis units, other than the failed analysis unit, can be maintained connected to the information network.

In the response to arguments section of the Office Action (page 4), the Examiner refers to column 9, lines 43-50 of Ohishi for disclosing the separating of an analysis unit from an information network. However, Ohishi merely describes the monitoring of analysis units with respect to which ones are carrying out an analysis processing and storing the results in memory

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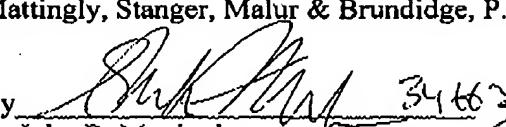
45. In column 10, lines 1-23, the system arrangement of Ohishi is described with respect to when one of the analysis units fails. Ohishi describes that the failed analysis unit is removed integral with its associated rack transfer mechanism from the conveyor line for repair. Although Ohishi describes that sample analysis processing can be handled continuously by the remaining analysis units and the conveyor line connected thereto, and further that the control unit may instruct another analysis unit to take over the analysis assignment from the failed analysis unit, Ohishi does not describe how to turn off (and on) a power source for one of the analysis units. Accordingly, Ohishi discloses a sample analysis system having plural analysis units, however the reference does not teach or suggest the central control device claimed by applicants in claims 1 and 6, and therefore the rejection under 35 U.S.C. §102(b) should be withdrawn.

Conclusion

In view of the foregoing, Applicant respectfully requests that a timely Notice of Allowance be issued in this case.

Respectfully submitted,

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